

Dolores Watershed and Resilient Forest (DWaRF) Collaborative

Meeting 10

9-7-16, 1:30 - 3:30 at Dolores Water Conservancy District Office

In Attendance:

Mike Preston, Pam Wilson, Tanner Hutt, Derek Padilla, Eric Janes, Ryan Cox, Amanda Brenner, Greg Kemp, Dewayne Findley, Jimbo Buickerood, Aaron Kimple, Thurman Wilson, Rebecca Samulski (facilitating)

Updates:

Becca made a presentation to the Rotary in Dolores about DWaRF.

We have had a couple of Go Fund Me donations so far. Each of us should try to share info about it with our networks, Facebook friends, etc.

The steering committee for the Mancos resiliency group is meeting the week of September 12. They will send out a Doodle poll about dates for a science meeting planned for October/November soon.

Becca met with someone from The Nature Conservancy that is working on Open Standards for Conservation. They are working on an upcoming workshop on this framework.

The August 18 meeting with Jim Hubbard (USFS Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry), Vicki Chistiansen (USFS Associate Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry), Mike Lester (Colorado State Forester), USFS Rocky Mountain and Southwest Region Office staff, and others went well. Becca made a presentation on DWaRF that was well received. Aaron thought all of our local efforts came across well – great partners and collaboration in getting fire back on the ground. Aaron said the visitors were very concerned with wildfire effects on people, especially the potential loss of homes.

Aaron reminded people that the “Bridging the Divide” workshop was happening September 9 (evening session at Wolf Creek Ski Area) and 10 (tour on the Pagosa and Divide Ranger Districts). The workshop will focus on climate change, forest ecology, and water.

Mike recently attended the Colorado Water Conference. He said there was lots of information and discussion on watershed restoration and wildfire mitigation. Mike will get more information about a couple of pieces of legislation relevant to our group that were discussed there.

Derek said he is responding to a request for proposals for projects in fiscal year 2017 that is due October 7. That has potential to provide funding for fuels reduction work that adds to our existing CAFA projects.

Jimbo was recently on a field trip in the Spring Creek Pass/Slumgullion Pass areas. He recounted a conversation with Hinsdale County Commissioner Cindy Dozier. They are very concerned about wildfire mitigation and access. They are working well with the US Forest Service (Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests). He also mentioned that aspen regeneration was filling in well after the West Fork Fire in that area.

DWaRF Goals 1 and 3:

The group split into pairs to work on objectives related to Goals 1 and 3 that were developed in earlier meetings. Then each pair presented its work to the larger group, which generated some questions and discussion. Some of the ideas were very overarching and applicable to all our collaborative work. Some were very detailed strategies while other ideas were measurable outcomes that group members would like to see on our way to meeting Goals 1 & 3.

Paramount to all DWaRF Goals:

- Outreach strategy: WUI population, water users, decision makers

- Funding strategy: Coordination and implementation
- Partnerships: maintain strong partnerships and strengthen interagency and regional partnerships. Coordinate activities of all the regional collaborative groups to identify areas of overlap and to share ideas.

Goal 1: Protect McPhee reservoir and other municipal water supplies by creating a resilient landscape in the Dolores River watershed. Improve and protect watershed health and functionality, lives and property, water-delivery systems, and other values at risk within the watershed.

- Dolores Watershed wildfire protection plan
 - defining and mapping the values at risk from fire (BLM)
 - and post-fire effects (AGWA with AZ) on private and public lands
 - prioritizing treatment areas
 - include ownership, slopes, vegetation types and conditions (management opportunities and constraints) to identify potential actions in each area
 - consider including economic viability of treatments and cost-benefit analysis on high priority landscapes
 - use current USFS data on watershed health (watershed health map)
 - include strategies for actionable opportunities
- Secure funding for work on the ground
- Garner community and political support
- Expand outreach activities to get more interest/ buy in on the importance of having resilient and healthy forests
- Encourage managed fire in treated areas
- Educate home and property owners on what they can do to reduce risk and improve forest health and protect the watershed. Make WUI issues better known and understood.

Strategies:

- Start in the headwaters of the Dolores and West Dolores Watersheds
- Identify municipal water users and sources
- Improve bank stabilization by removing invasive species and promoting the growth of native species
- Prevent sedimentation by reducing risk of severe wildfires. Strategically place timber harvests to make it easier to use fire where it will be most advantageous for protecting values at risk.
- Leverage concern for clean water in towns.

Goal 3: Enable active management projects in all forest types to reduce the potential extent of high-severity wildfires, promote forest health and appropriate age, size, and class diversity, and provide a myriad of additional ecological and economic benefits.

Objective: Double industry harvesting and processing

- Explore opportunities for a long-term stewardship contract on Dolores Ranger District

Objective: Increase local wood utilization – purchase of local wood products

Objective: Accomplish at least 1,000 acres of cross-jurisdictional treatment annually for the next 3-5 years, increasing incrementally after the initial 5 year period.

- Utilize good neighbor authority to implement cross-boundary vegetation treatments.

- Locally advocate for electric co-ops to be allowed to enter into power purchase agreements with biomass energy producing entities.
- Consider both fire risk reduction and engineering and structure hardening solutions
- Put treatments where they will be most efficient and effective
- Ponderosa Pine Connection: Support
- Provide support as needed for the local forest product industry

Public-Private Lands Tour:

Based on the responses to the Doodle Poll, the tour is scheduled for 9-12 am, October 20. We will look at some of the land around Joe Moore Reservoir and the Adams Ranch where we have a CAFA grant for thinning, mastication, and pile burning on state and private lands near National Forest boundaries. We may also look at the South Carver prescribed burn.

Next Steps:

Everyone spread the word about the Go Fund Me opportunity. Several people said they would through their networks – Pam (FireWise), Derek (USFS), Greg (Protect Montezuma County), Dewayne (Rotary and Bank), and Amanda (SCC).

Aaron and Becca agreed to have a discussion to map out how San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership/Mountain Studies Institute and DWaRF/FireWise interact.

Becca will visit with Montezuma County about funding opportunities.

Becca will share the Doodle Poll about the Mancos River science workshop when it is available.

Next Meeting: We will do the CAFA tour rather than have a meeting in October. The next indoors meeting will be November 5 (our normal schedule of 1:30 to 3:30 on the first Wednesday of the month).

Notes by Thurman Wilson with Becca Samulski edits